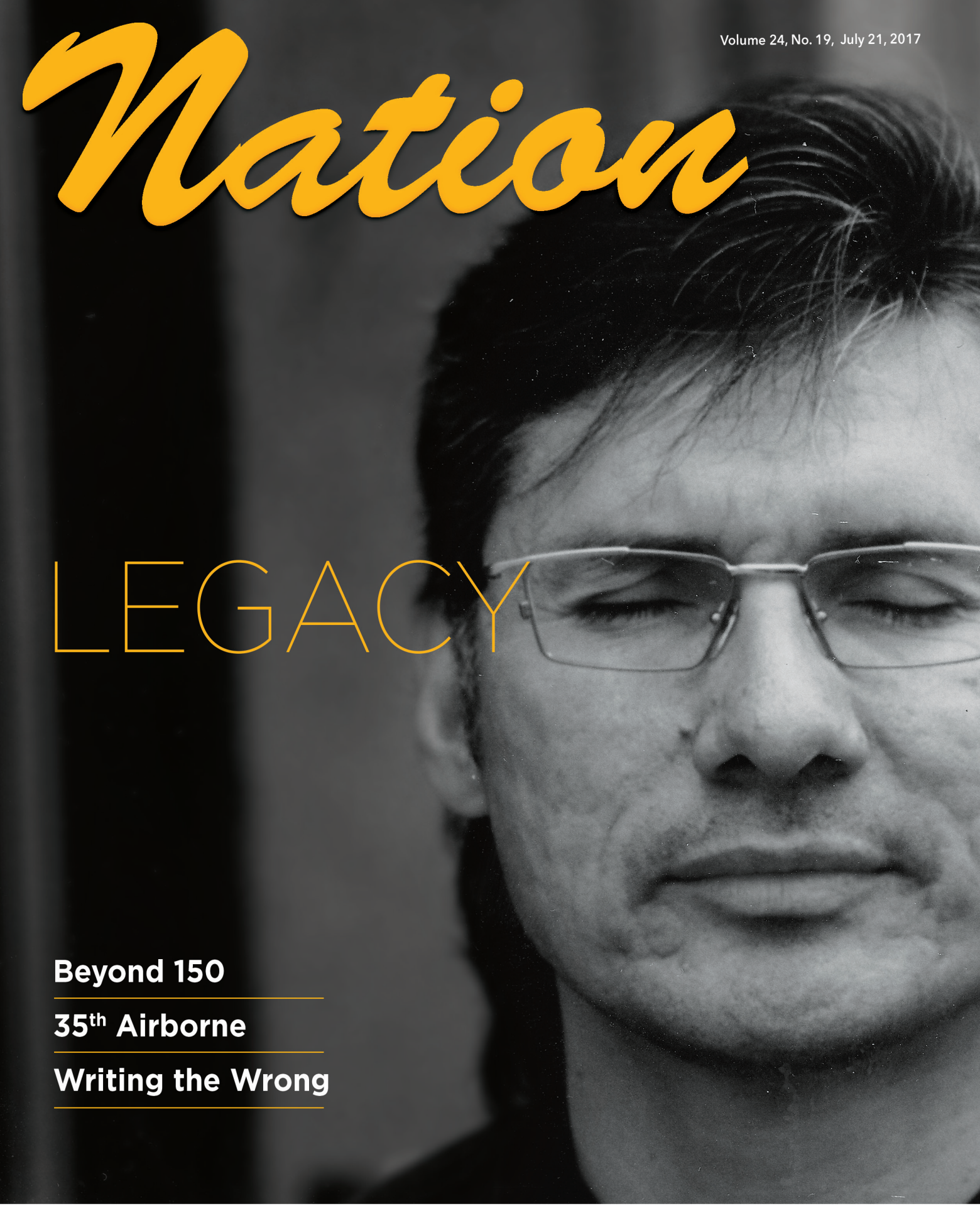
Volume 24, No. 19, July 21, 2017

Nation



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Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)
Grand Conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee)

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Cree Nation Government
Gouvernement de la Nation Crie

C. N. G.

The Cree Nation Pays Tribute to Dr. Matthew Coon Come

The achievements of the Cree Nation over the past 40 years have not been ordinary achievements brought about by ordinary leaders.

Since 1975, the Cree Nation has successfully conducted a revolution. We have accomplished what, in other places in the world faced with the similar challenges of decolonization, required violent rebellion. We have created Nation-to-Nation relations with governments, we have extracted ourselves from the paternalistic and oppressive Indian Act while creating our own form of self-government with our own Constitution, we are now responsible for delivering education, health, social services, policing and justice, and we have vastly improved the living conditions in our communities. No projects can take place on our traditional territory without our consent and without our involvement. We have begun to recreate our original sovereignty and we have become proud Nation-builders.

Our Grand Chief, Matthew Coon Come, occupied the leadership role of the Cree Nation for more than half of that 40-year period. He led our Nation through the turbulent 1990's when we struggled to protect the land of Eeyou/Eenou Istchee from the devastation of more flooding which would have been the result of proposed hydro-electric projects. He led us through a period of renewed Quebec nationalism and a referendum that threatened to trample on our Indigenous rights, our Cree rights and our human rights, and he led us through a struggle to eliminate undemocratic forms of regional governance which threatened to make us second-class citizens in our own traditional territory.

The victories of the Cree Nation under his leadership created the conditions whereby both Federal and Provincial Governments came to realize that they could not treat us as in the past. They realized that they would need to come to terms with us as a People, with our rights. They realized that we would not be passive in the face of any violations or abuses of our rights. These victories paved the way for the historic "Paix des Braves", the New Relationship Agreement with Canada, the Governance Agreement with Quebec and the Governance Agreement with Canada.

History will record the achievements of the Cree Nation under the leadership of Matthew Coon Come as crucial to the development of our Indigenous Nation which is blazing a trail in establishing new benchmarks for Indigenous peoples in Canada and throughout the world.

The Cree Nation will be forever grateful to Matthew Coon Come for his vision, his commitment and his tireless determination in advancing our Cree Nation.

Mista meegwetch, Matthew

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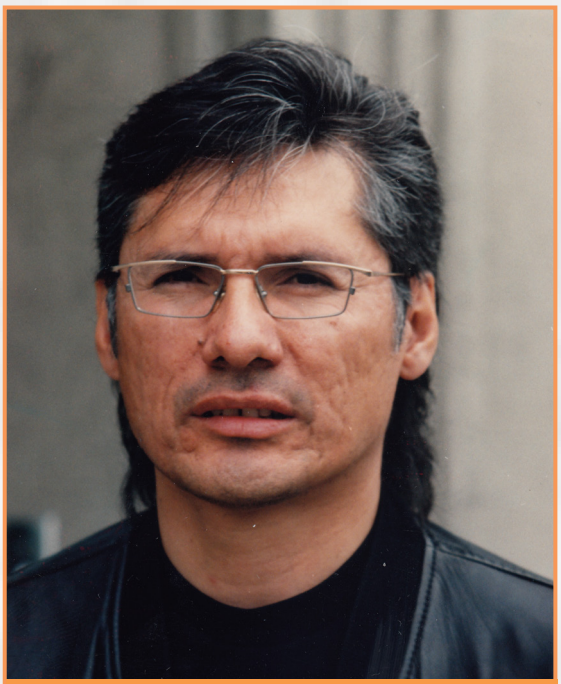

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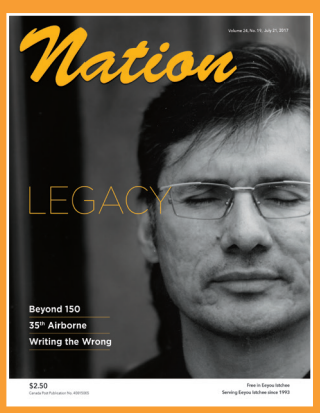

Grand Chief, Dr. Matthew Coon Come

Joshua Grant

May 15, 2015 - July 4, 2017

by Will Nicholls

Photo provided by Joshua Grant

It is with real regret we say goodbye to Joshua Grant. I remember when Joshua strolled into *the Nation* office looking like he had just finished modeling for a portrait of Jesus. Long hair, a beard and a beatific smile composed his usual come-to-work look.

No, he's not dead. Just leaving… sort of.

He is a great writer but we managed, back in 2015, to convince him to also be our social media and production coordinator. Before Josh we only had a production coordinator but his skill set allowed us to expand that role into a much-needed and underserved area.

Josh would take on jobs such a looking at our print runs and subscriptions and determine what needed to be modified to reflect the needs of our readers. He ran a tight ship but was flexible when it was called for.

Josh brought a sense of humour to work and often had us clutching our bellies with laughter. He is serious about his passions, but a big goof at heart.

He will be missed… sort of. One of the reasons Josh left his position is to concentrate on his writing. He will still be reporting for *the Nation* even as he explores other opportunities that suit his many talents – which also include soccer, softball and drumming in rock bands. He's a real Renaissance man.

Taking over his position is Daniel Isaac, who Josh trained extensively for about 20 minutes. We thank Josh for his commitment and hard work to make *the Nation* more responsive to our readers. We're thankful he'll continue writing for us, but wish him luck chasing his dreams.

It's a Runoff

The Grand Council election July 12 didn't produce an outright victor, meaning there will be a runoff for both Grand Chief and Deputy Grand Chief. Abel Bosum and Rodney Mark will face off for Grand Chief while Mandy Gull and John Matoush will be on the final ballot for Deputy.
The runoff election is July 24. Please take the time to vote.

Grand Council elections, first-round results

GRAND CHIEF	Ballots	Percentage	DEPUTY GRAND CHIEF	Ballots	Percentage
Abel Bosum	2229	40%	Mandy Gull	2415	44%
Rodney Mark	1171	21%	John Matoush	2102	38%
Richard Shecapio	809	15%	Reggie D. Neeposh	1000	18%%
Darlene Cheechoo	703	13%			
Ashley Iserhoff	643	12%			

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by Joshua Grant

A historic achievement

Canada adopts **Cree Governance Act**

Almost a decade of preparing for Cree autonomy finally paid off for the Grand Council of the Cree on June 16, when the Liberal government cabinet approved the Cree Governance Act.

The only problem was they couldn't tell anyone about it. The approval was under embargo from the public until the federal cabinet had informed the Quebec government.

"If you release the information without their permission, sometimes they'll deny that there was ever an agreement in place," explained Executive Director Bill Namagoose.

When Quebec was notified on June 29 and moved to abstain, the Grand Council finally issued a press release confirming the milestone in Cree history. The agreement will be signed soon and follows both consultations and approvals in each Cree community.

"On February 21, 2008, we signed the New Relationship Agreement between Canada and the Cree," Namagoose recounted. "It was contemplated that we would have a governance agreement but it took nine years to complete the negotiations.

"We were at an impasse because the federal government wanted to impose their Aboriginal self-government policy, which we couldn't accept," Namagoose explained. "It was not a constitutional policy, it was a policy at the discretion of the federal government. Every year when they pass a budget in February they change all kinds of policies, which could include the Aboriginal self-government policy."

Namagoose emphasized the importance of the fact that the new agreement is tied to the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA).

"We wanted our governance agreement to flow through a treaty," he said.

> *"We were at an impasse because the federal government wanted to impose their Aboriginal self-government policy,* ***which we couldn't accept"***
>
> *- Bill Namagoose*

"That was the impasse. We managed to get Canada to agree that this Cree governance agreement flow through the JBNQA, which is a constitutional document."

The Cree Naskapi Act, signed in 1984, will act as Eeyou Istchee's temporary constitution as a consultation process begins over the ultimate form of a Cree constitution.

"With the governance agreement, there had to be a constitution that accompanied it," said Namagoose. "Since the constitution will be a long process, the Cree leadership agreed that the Cree Naskapi Act, a federal act, will be the interim constitution. Eventually a Cree constitution will replace it."

The process of creating a Cree constitution has already begun, with a Cree Constitution working group coordinated by Willie Mianscum and rounded out by Matthew Mukash, Ted Moses, Abel Bosum and Namagoose. He says work will pick up on the process after the elections.

"The issue is determining the Cree view of what a constitution should be," Namagoose said. "Canada and the United States view their constitutions as the founding document of a nation. We don't need a piece of paper to establish the Cree Nation like Canada and the States do, because we're not located on stolen land."

But Namagoose said a constitution is important in a contemporary context in order to have a strong government and strong governance.

"Our relationship with Canada and Quebec is already defined but the agreement gives us more autonomy, more financial security and we'll be able to adopt laws," he explained. "The Cree Constitution will be a purely Cree document, the federal government will have no say whatsoever. It's going to be a manual for how Crees want the Cree Nation to be governed."

Despite, in some quarters, criticism of the consultation process for the Governance Agreement, Namagoose believes it was well-handled and provides a path for feedback on the final constitutional proposal.

"We certainly had a robust community consultation and feedback," he said. "There was a lot of community engagement and that's what we wanted. It's always good to hear people's concerns. We learned a lot of lessons from the consultations and we really appreciate all the people's comments and input."

Namagoose thanked everyone involved in making Cree self-governance a reality.

"It's going to be a historic day for the Cree," he concluded. "Greater autonomy, our own constitution. And we're strengthening the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement, a treaty and a constitutional document that defines our relationship with Canada and Quebec."

Conseil Cri de la santé et des services sociaux de la Baie James

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Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay

Thank You!

On behalf of the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay, I wish to thank our Grand Chief Dr. Matthew Coon Come for his untiring leadership and his profound contribution to the wellbeing of our Nation.

Bella M. Petawabano
Chairperson and Representative of the CBHSSJB to the Grand Council of the Crees of Eeyou Istchee/Cree Nation Government

Meegwetch!

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August 2015 Annual General Assembly of the GCCEI/CNG, Oujé-Bougoumou. Photo: T. Philiptchenko for CBHSSJB.

Message *misstep*

by Amy German | Photo by ***Chairs and Tables***

Romeo Saganash's statement on Canada 150 sideswiped by plagiarism

Romeo Saganash came out swinging at Canada for celebrating 150 years of colonialism in his July 1 Globe and Mail op-ed column titled, "150 years of cultural genocide: Today, like all days, is an insult."

Unfortunately, his condemnation of Canada for treating Aboriginals worse than any other member of society, its policies of cultural genocidal and the expropriation of funds to help the poor on reserves was muted by allegations he plagiarized parts of his article.

Saganash, the NDP MP for Abitibi–Baie-James–Nunavik–Eeyou, apologized. "In drafting my letter on my thoughts on Canada 150, a mistake was made by which ideas that were expressed by someone else were not given proper credit. I take full responsibility for this omission and have taken steps to correct this."

The Globe and Mail later reposted a corrected version of Saganash's column that properly attributed the quotes to Erica Violet Lee, an Indigenous activist and blogger from Saskatoon, and University of Toronto PhD student Eric Ritskes.

It was Lee who first noticed that complete paragraphs from a speech she delivered on the 150th anniversary at Carlton University last March had been included in the article. According to APTN, Saganash contacted Lee to apologize and correct the record. Though under his byline, the column had apparently been written by an assistant.

Sadly, this incident took the wind out of the op-ed, which eloquently describes what it is like being a residential-school survivor and how the trauma of his experience still robs Saganash of sleep.

"It started when I was young," reads the column. "Now I have a whole regimen of supports to help me sleep: exercise, healthy eating, music, darkness, relaxing tea, books of poetry. When it gets really bad: mandatory time off, writing, sleeping under the stars beside white pine trees, near a lake, on the land of the Eeyou, my people."

It went to describe the effects of colonization on a personal basis: "How deep the tentacles reach. How vast the expanse of jarring totalitarian domination extends. Someone said to me recently that they like to have friends with different political and social points of view because it broadens their experiences and teaches them to refine arguments. For the past seven generations, in order to adapt to and accommodate the colonizer's values, goals, institutions and society, I have learned to see so broadly that my eyes tear up," he wrote. "You see, for us, nearly everything around us represents colonial domination and genocide and is an example of Indigenous resiliency. Except that I'm really tired of constantly having to fight to prove that I have the right to exist."

"And I can't sleep."

In response to questions from *the Nation* Saganash said it remains difficult for him to celebrate Canada Day for many reasons. "Among them is the fact that the vast majority of Indigenous people in this country continue to live in Third World conditions despite being in one of the richest countries in the world," he said. "Indigenous children and Youth continue to take their lives; Indigenous women and girls continue to go missing or get murdered; the housing crisis in Indigenous communities remains critical; and our fundamental rights continue to be challenged in courts by governments."

Saganash added that there are exceptions, where life is improving.

"Eeyou Istchee is a case in point, as [Grand Chief] Matthew Coon Come rightly pointed out," he noted. "But I stand also with the rest of my Sisters and Brothers throughout the land who have not been as fortunate as my people; so Matthew can have my piece of Canada 150 cake."

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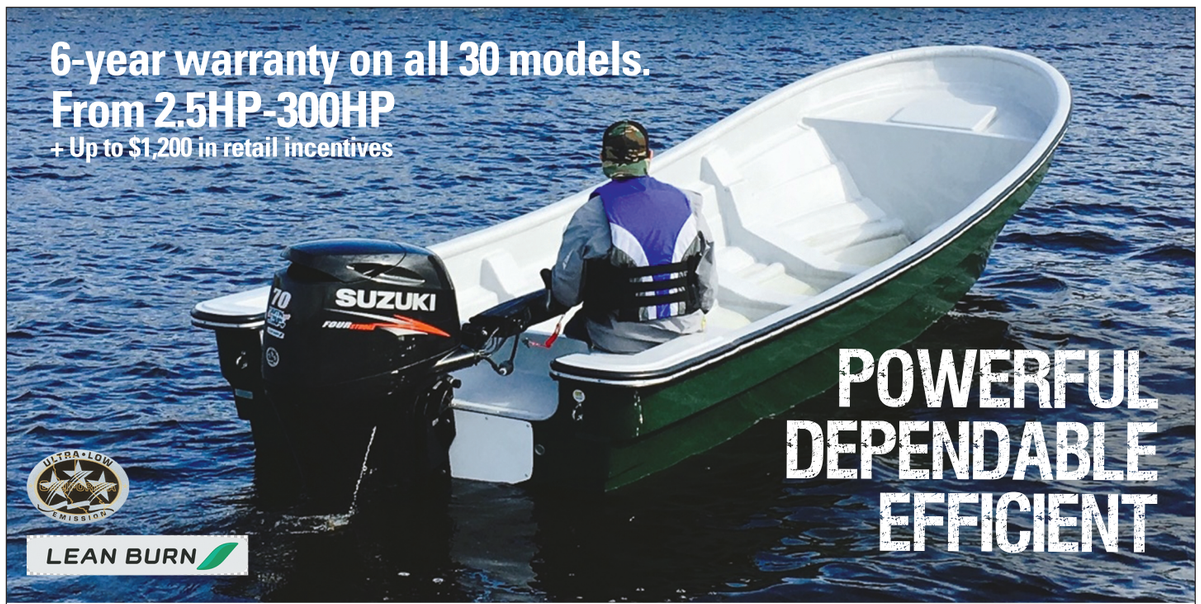

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MMIWG **commissioner resigns**

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) was dealt a blow July 11 when one of its five commissioners resigned.

In a letter to Indigenous Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Marilyn Poitras outlined a failure by the inquiry to meet expectations.

"I had imagined the chance to put an Indigenous process first; to seek out and rely on Indigenous laws," wrote Poitras, a Métis from Saskatchewan. "I realized the vision I hold is shared by very few within the National Inquiry – with the status quo colonial model of hearings is the path for most."

And while Poitras is the first commissioner to step down, four other staff members resigned in the past month amidst family complaints and organizational criticism.

A press conference calling for drastic changes was held by a Manitoba coalition of MMIWG families and survivors on July 12. "We are requesting Canada remove the current commissioners and adopt an Indigenous process," said Sandra Delaronde, a spokesperson for the group.

Despite the resignation and calls to disband and start anew, the federal government remains steadfast. "Some families are calling me and saying, 'This has to continue, we've waited 30 years for this,'" Bennett said during a press conference.

In Brief

James Bay Highway repairs

The federal government, Quebec and Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come jointly announced July 10 that $265 million would be invested to repair the James Bay Highway. The project will cover a 620-kilometre stretch of road from Matagami to Radisson.

Complaints of potholes deep enough to tear tires off had become a constant reminder of the road's condition on social media. The project promises to resurface over half of 620-km section of road, as well as repair culverts, guardrails and signage.

In addition to smoother driving conditions, the hope is that it will encourage tourism and economic opportunities for the north.

"It's exciting news for tourists, for the communities and for vehicle safety," said Deputy Grand Chief Rodney Mark. "But still, watch your speed!"

NAN student **safety crisis**

Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) is calling on both the City of Thunder Bay and the neighbouring Fort William First Nation to declare a state of emergency.

The request comes two days after an emergency Ontario Chiefs meeting in response to growing concerns for Indigenous safety in Thunder Bay. Fiddler told the CBC that NAN cannot call the state of emergency alone.

Since 2000, seven Indigenous teens have "drowned" in the McIntyre River. Five were students at Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School – a school serving students from Indigenous fly-in communities.

All the deaths were ruled accidental by the Thunder Bay Police Service (TBPS) despite strong encouragement from NAN to treat several of the cases as murder investigations.

The treatment by the TBPS of the recent deaths of Josiah Begg and Tammy Keeash in May sparked outrage, and prompted NAN to call for the TBPS to be disbanded.

During the emergency chiefs meeting, some stated they would not allow students to leave their community to attend classes in Thunder Bay this coming fall. Some students may have to attend high school through Internet or radio-based programs.

"What is the cost of education?" Elder Barney Batisse asked the emergency chiefs assembly. "When we look at the crisis within and the loss of life and dignity, then I say the price is too high."

FROM TRAPLINE TO STATESMAN THE LEGACY OF MATTHEW COON COME

by Will Nicholls

There are many defining moments in a person's life that shape them into the person they ultimately become. One could look at Matthew Coon Come's birth in the bush on his parent's trapline in 1959, for instance.

It's a familiar fact to anyone who has ever heard Coon Come deliver a speech. While some may say that he used this as a self-serving comparison to Abraham Lincoln's mythology about being born in a log cabin, the circumstances of his birth weren't unusual for many Cree of his generation. Instead, he mentioned it repeatedly in order to underline his commitment to the environment and determination to enforce sustainable methods of resource extraction on Cree territory that respected the Cree way of life. This connection to the land survived the residential-school experience that was intended to sever it. For people like Matthew Coon Come, it reinforced the need for the Cree to renew their bonds with their land, language, community and culture.

One of the defining moments was certainly the battle over Quebec's La Grande hydroelectric project. While the Cree faced many challenges throughout the years, this would be one that would come to define the face of today's Eeyou Istchee.

To succeed, Cree trappers learn everything they can about the environment that sustains them. The challenge of La Grande demonstrated to the Cree the need to understand their environment went far beyond Eeyou Istchee. The Cree needed to know how to navigate the outside world.

It has been a long journey. Only three years after his first political term, still only 24, he became **one of the youngest Cree chiefs** ever elected

Perhaps this was the reason Coon Come studied political science, economics, Native studies and courses in law at Trent and McGill universities. It was to understand the world that had suddenly threatened to change the lives of the James Bay Cree. During the battle over the first phase of Hydro-Québec's La Grande project, the Cree had to rely on outside assistance. While they appreciated the many allies, they recognized the need to learn what they need to know to ensure the continuation of the Cree way of life.

Now, 40 years after Coon Come came home to Mistissini at the tender age of 21 to serve his people as an elected band councillor, he is ending his political journey.

In declining his nomination to stand for re-election as Grand Chief, he leaves a legacy of accomplishment that has transformed Eeyou Istchee.

It has been a long journey. Only three years after his first political term, still only 24, he became one of the youngest Cree chiefs ever elected. He would serve two terms as Chief of Mistissini, and during that time his community saw a new arena, an adult education centre, a bank, new administrative offices, new health facilities, and major improvements to its housing and community infrastructure.

He took a short break and joined his father on the trapline. He would then accept a position as Executive Director of the Grand Council of the Cree, during which he ensured that the Grand Council achieved consultative status at the United Nations. Issues that the Cree were dealing with were nothing new to many other Indigenous peoples around the world. Recognizing that many voices were louder than the lone voice in the wilderness, the Grand Council used this status to unite Indigenous peoples and make vital common concerns known to the international community.

Coon Come was first elected as Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees and Chairman of the Cree Regional Authority in 1987. He served for 20 years in this position, winning six elections. It would be in his first term as Grand Chief that he would face his first major challenge when Quebec announced plans in 1986 to build the Great Whale hydroelectric project.

It was a turning point for the Cree Nation. Coon Come and Grand Council Executive Director Bill Namagoose discussed whether or not the Grand Council would support Whapmagoostui in their battle to save the Great Whale River. They knew it could be the worst or the best choice for the Cree Nation. In the end, it was decided that it was important to unite the Cree to protect their way of life, the land and all life that exists there.

Unlike La Grande, Coon Come realized this fight would take more than a court battle. He knew the Cree would be unlikely to rally a majority of the Quebec people to the Cree cause. Having learned their lessons from the 1970s, Hydro-Québec led a PR campaign by wrapping itself in the Quebec flag.

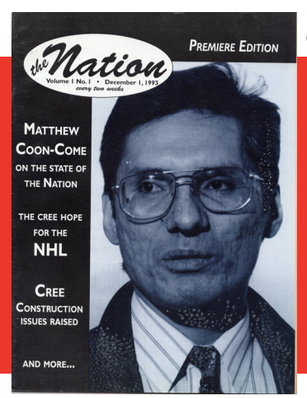
So other strategies were established, including drawing in a reluctant federal government to oversee an environmental review process outlined in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement.

More ammunition was loaded to address the fact that Hydro-Québec was pre-selling power from the proposed project to states in the northeastern US. Scientists, energy consultants, lobbyists and grassroots speakers were mobilized to address the project on the Cree side. The Grand Council brought the issue to the United Nations and the International Water Tribunal. Musicians, artists, actors, activists, environmentalist, politicians, unions and media clambered for the Cree to talk to them. They all wanted to help and the support was overwhelming.

Finally, in November 1994, the newly elected Premier Jacques Parizeau, anticipating international opinion over the referendum fight he would lead the following year, put the project on ice. The victory ensured that the Cree were world political actors who were not to be taken lightly.

It wouldn't be the last time that Parizeau had to deal with the Cree. During the 1995 referendum on whether Quebec would separate from Canada, Coon Come's Grand Council organized their own referendum

Come and other protesters (inset) slam government plans.


the Nation
Premiere Edition
Volume 1 No. 1 • December 1, 1993
Matthew Coon-Come
on the state of the Nation
The Cree hope for the NHL
Cree Construction issues raised
and more...

Coon Come featured on the first ever editon of *the Nation*

It would be in his first term as Grand Chief that he would face his first major challenge when Quebec announced plans in 1986 to build the **Great Whale hydroelectric project.**

Every argument that the separatists make in their preambles, in their declarations, in their laws, are arguments the Crees can make – ***9,000 years, better***

to ask the Cree for their position on their political future.

"Crees have as much right as Quebecers to hold a referendum," Coon Come said at the time. "Every argument that the separatists make in their preambles, in their declarations, in their laws, are arguments the Crees can make – 9,000 years, better."

In the end, 77% of Cree voters cast ballots, with 96.3% saying No to allowing an independent Quebec to take them and their territory out of Canada in the event of a Yes vote in the Oct 30, 1995 Quebec referendum. "Crees have sent an overwhelming message to the Parti Québécois government," said Coon Come. "They want no part of the separatist project. We have spoken as unanimously as a people can."

Among the many milestones Coon Come achieved by building on the work of those who came before him was the acceptance of the Cree Governance Agreement. First mentioned in the 2007 New Relationship Agreement signed by then-Grand Chief Matthew Mukash with the federal government, the deal would add $200 million to Cree coffers.

It took 10 years to finalize the agreement and thereby achieve something that no other First Nation in Canada has ever attained. Ratified this past spring, the Cree Constitution and Governance Agreement means that Cree communities in Eeyou Istchee will no longer have to justify or give financial reports to Canada. Eeyou Istchee Cree First Nations will soon be able to enact their own laws without oversight from Quebec or Canada. It is an unprecedented step toward self-governance.

Coon Come's political career has witnessed an incredible change in the way outside governments deal with the Cree, and in the power the Cree now exercise over their territory. Back in 1959, when Coon Come was born on his parents' trapline, there were no roads, no running water, no sewage system, no electricity or phones in Mistissini. There was also no consideration given to the desires, needs or interests of the Cree of Eeyou Istchee. All that is in the past. The extraordinary changes for the Cree that Coon Come and other leaders brought to bear on behalf of Eeyou Istchee is nothing short of exceptional.

Coon Come announced his desire to not run with the following words:

This afternoon, I submitted my response of my nomination as "Grand Chief/Chairman of GCCIE/CNG to the Returning Officer.

I began as a Band Councillor, Chief, Grand Chief/Chairman, National Chief and then back as Grand Chief/Chairman.

I started at a young age of 21 and now I am 61. Guess 40 years of my life has been in Indigenous politics of which over 30 years has been with the Cree Nation.

I have been the Grand Chief/Chairman for 20 years.

I consider just being nominated for an elected position a great honour.

I want to thank all those that have nominated me both in the past and present.

On behalf of my family, I want to thank our Cree people of Eeyou Istchee for giving me the privilege and honour to represent our Cree Nation for this long.

Having read this far, you guessed right.

I did not accept my nomination for the Office of Grand Chief/Chairman.

May God continue to bless our Nation.

THANK YOU CREE NATION.

Coon Come also served as the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations from 2000 to 2003. He became known throughout Canada for his efforts to end the federal policy of extinguishment of Aboriginal peoples' human rights of self determination.

In 1994, Coon Come was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize, the "Nobel Prize of Environmental Awards", for his resistance to Hydro-Québec's proposed Great Whale Project

In 1998, Trent University granted Coon Come the degree of Doctor of Laws Honoris Causa in recognition of the significance of his work, and in 2000, the University of Toronto also awarded him an honorary Doctor of Laws. In 2005, the River Bible Institute made Coon Come a Doctor of Divinity. He also received the National Aboriginal Achievement Award in 1995.

Coon Come has been a Director of Air Creebec; CreeCo (Cree Regional Economic Enterprises Company); the Cree Construction Company; Servinor; the James Bay Cree Cultural Education Centre; the Centre for Indigenous Environment Resources; and the Cree School Board. In 1995, he became a founding director of the First Nations Bank of Canada.

In all, this is just a small glimpse into a leader the Cree embraced for so many years.

Eeyou Istchee Cree First Nations will soon be able to enact their own laws without oversight from Quebec or Canada. **It is an unprecedented step toward self-governance.**

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NISKAMOON
CORPORATION

Grand Chief Dr. Matthew Coon Come,

Always striving for the best for our people, you made a real difference. Thank you for your endless strength, courage and innovation. You are a true inspiration to our Nation.

Wishing you the very best for your future endeavours.

Your fellow Niskamoon board members and staff

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Geoffrey Kelley

Minister responsible for Native Affairs, Quebec

For more than 30 years, Dr Matthew Coon Come has devoted his time and energy to the careful management of the challenges of the Crees of Eeyou Istchee. I have had the privilege of working with Matthew on many important issues, and I have always been impressed by his hard work and preparation.

This first characteristic of Matthew that struck me is his long-range vision for Eeyou Istchee. We are often critical of political leaders for only thinking in the short term. But Matthew has certain goals and objectives for his people, and is willing to take the steps necessary today to arrive at this destination. Whether we were negotiating the Cree-Jamisien regional government or the Cree vision of northern development in response to the Plan Nord, Matthew has always defended the importance of economic development for the Crees, and the defence of Cree rights and interests. His goal is to ensure that the Crees are full partners in the development of Eeyou Istchee. He also insists that we be mindful of the principles of sustainable development to protect the environment and traditional activities of the Crees.

Matthew is also aware of the importance of education for the future of Eeyou Istchee. A scholar himself, he tracks carefully the progress being made by the Cree School Board. He also takes pride in the number of Cree students enrolled in post-secondary education. He knows that the future of Eeyou Istchee depends on the training received by the youth of the Cree Nation.

Matthew is now retiring after nearly 40 years of public service. I would like to thank Matthew for his great contribution to Eeyou Istchee, Quebec and Canada. We have all benefited from his visionary leadership. Meegwetch Matthew!

WE ARE OFTEN CRITICAL OF POLITICAL LEADERS FOR ONLY THINKING IN THE SHORT TERM.

But Matthew has certain goals and objectives for his people, and is willing to take the steps necessary today to arrive at this destination

- Geoffrey Kelley

Joseph P. Kennedy II

Chairman & President, Citizens Energy Corporation

My good friend Matthew Coon Come stands in the forefront of global Indigenous leaders who have tirelessly fought for sovereignty, dignity and self-determination. I first met Matthew when he launched an international campaign to defend his people and their lands from the Great Whale dam project. His commitment to environmentally sensitive development led to an ongoing partnership between the Mistissini Cree and Citizens Energy to create clean, renewable wind power to benefit the Cree and help preserve the planet. Whether standing up for the rights of the First Nations of Canada or Aboriginal peoples worldwide, the Grand Chief has won the respect of presidents, prime ministers and parliaments all over the planet. But most of all, he has served his people with honour and trust and earned the respect of the Elders.

THE CREE MINERAL EXPLORATION BOARD
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This is an occasion to say thank you Grand Chief, and to reflect on the last **30 years of your vision** on Cree nation building and Eeyou Istchee development. Your efforts to end the federal policy of extinguishment of the aboriginal, treaty and human rights of indigenous peoples everywhere, is a great legacy, and an inspiration for us all.

Thank you Grand Chief.

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Bill Namagoose

Executive Director, Grand Council of the Cree

I have known Matthew as a friend and colleague sice we were at Philemon Wright High School in Gatineau. We watched on TV and read reports what was happening to our people and to Eeyou Istchee, our home. I knew he was troubled and perhaps angry, like I was. In our discussions we understood we were going to go home one day and do something about it.

We were Chiefs in our respective communities at the same time and then in 1988 we ended up at the Grand Council of the Crees, he as Grand Chief and me as its Executive Director.

Leading with his sharp mind and charisma he changed the relationship with Quebec, Hydro-Québec and Canada by boldly and fearlessly challenging them by asserting Cree rights. Some of the Cree leaders and advisors thought we had gone too far and feared we had poked the bear too vigorously and the Cree Nation would face retribution. The fight continued until the paradigm changed and the governments realized the Cree Nation's new strengths and then signed new relationship agreements that propelled the Cree Nation.

He was the leader in the effort to stop Great Whale, assert Cree rights during Quebec's drive for independence, build Oujé-Bougoumou and set up new Governance regimes with Quebec and Canada.

Rodney Mark

Deputy Grand Chief

Matthew Coon Come is Grand in so many ways; it was with great pleasure I spent the past four years working with him. He has a Grand heart that pounds with compassion and love for the people. His strength and determination as a leader for the good of the people is, I would say, "KICKASS." Sorry Matt, I had to say that. For all the accomplishments you made for the Cree Nation: Thank You. Thank You. My conclusion is "YOU ARE AWESOME". You will be my Grand Chief forever.

LEADING WITH HIS SHARP MIND & CHARISMA

He changed the relationship with Quebec, Hydro-Québec and Canada by boldly and fearlessly challenging them by asserting Cree rights.

- Bill Namagoose

PetroNor

Thank you Grand Chief Dr. Matthew Coon Come

"This is an occasion to say **thank you Grand Chief,** and to reflect on the last **30 years of your vision** on Cree nation building and Eeyou Istchee development, Your efforts to end the federal policy of extinguishment of the aboriginal, treaty and human rights of indigenous peoples everywhere, is a great legacy, and an inspiration for us all."

IN ALL OF CANADA, THE CREE OF EEYOU ISTCHEE is a model for many First Nations of what the future could look like.

- Jean Charest

Jean Charest

Former Premier of Quebec

I have a great deal of respect and admiration for the Grand Chief. He and I go way back because I was the federal Minister of the Environment in the early 1990s when the Grand Baleine Project was being proposed and he was leading much of the charge against it. So we crossed paths at that time. He was quite formable at the time as he always was. It was quite impressive. A very articulate spokesman for the Cree Nation.

In hindsight it was one of the defining moments for the Cree Nation. I would say that I was at a particular vantage point because I wasn't proposing the project because I wasn't with the provincial government. I was with the federal government. We had our own internal issues because our environmental process was being commented on by the courts. We had no environmental assessment law yet we had a directive that was interpreted as being one.

So there was all sorts of internal issues but I wasn't the one proposing it. I didn't have skin in that game but we ended up being a player in that story as we determined we had a legal obligation to do the environmental assessment, which ran up against the JBNQA and the Quebec assessment. It was an environment in which there had been a recession in Quebec. The business community was up in arms over the fact we were doing an assessment. But Matthew, on the other side, was an articulate and effective leader in regards of defending the rights of the Cree Nation and it was a defining moment.

When I became Premier of Quebec I have to say it was interesting to see the strength of the Cree leaders. The Cree have been fortunate in having good strong leaders. I got along with all the Cree leaders but when Matthew Coon Come came along we got along very well. It was one of those rare opportunities where things aligned and our personal relationship was very good.

We had the Plan Nord. He took a very hard look at it from the perspective of the Cree. He looked at it very seriously and we ended up working together. I was very appreciative of that. He represented the interests of the Cree well. It allowed us to make an amendment to the JBNQA.

One of the things we did together that is very significant is the creation of this new governance agreement. That's something that is still being tested, but the feedback is positive. I know it's being looked at elsewhere as an example of how governance with First Nations and other communities can be managed in the future.

I find myself very lucky to have known Matthew and to have work with him. I have a great deal of respect for what he has accomplished. I wish him very well and I am sorry to see him go. In all of Canada, the Cree of Eeyou Istchee is a model for many First Nations of what the future could look like.

AIR CREEBEC

SPREADING THEIR WINGS

by Joshua Grant | Photos provided by AirCreebec

On July 5, 1982, a bright orange Twin Otter took off from the Val-d'Or airport. After stops in Matagami, Rupert House, Eastmain, Wemindji and Fort George, the plane landed in Whapmagoostui, marking the maiden voyage of Air Creebec and Eeyou Istchee's foray into the air transportation industry. Earlier this month marked 35 years in the business, an opportunity to reflect on the company's success and look forward to what the future has in store.

"I remember the early days when I was very young, hearing, 'Hey the Crees own an airline now,'" Chief Operating Officer Tanya Pash told *the Nation*. "I would have been about eight years old and we had one aircraft. It was something to be proud of – my parents always told me I was a shareholder of an airline and growing up I always had that in mind."

Air Creebec reflects on its history and looks to the future on its 35th anniversary

"I remember the early days when I was very young, hearing 'Hey the Crees own an airline now,'"

-Chief Operating Officer Tanya Pash

What started small has grown steadily and evolved over the years, adapting to the needs of the Cree Nation and those who work in northern Quebec and Ontario – while also developing valuable new partnerships and services. Most recently, this has included the creation of medical shuttles for patients who need to get to major hospitals in Val-d'Or and Montreal.

"Today, we have 19 aircrafts on our certificate," said Pash. "We are competitive with major airlines, and have the same standards as national airlines such as Air Canada and Air Transat. It should be a point of pride."

Though she was young when Air Creebec started, Pash is quite familiar with the story. Air Creebec's initial leadership group had to learn quickly and prove people wrong, fighting both unfamiliarity with a competitive industry and stereotypes perpetuated about Indigenous people.

"It was amazing what [Air Creebec] did," she said, "because they went into an industry that they had little to no knowledge about. Most of them had no formal training and many of them came from the trapline. They were put in a place where they had to succeed in a business environment, one which seemed foreign – these people were groomed to be trappers.

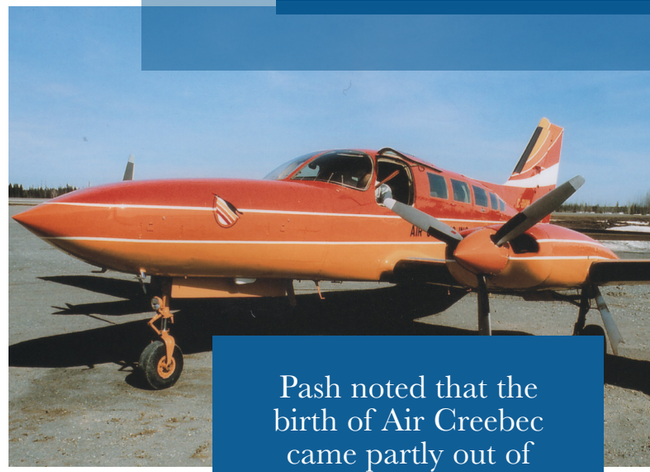
"Back then it wasn't always easy to be a Native person," she added. "There were certain expectations, one of those being that Native people don't succeed. A lot of the work that the previous leadership put in has proved that Crees are capable people, they are able to succeed."

Pash noted that the birth of Air Creebec came partly out of necessity and partly as a push for Cree independence. The trappers-turned-business-operators, people like former Grand Chief and company president Billy Diamond, looked at their environment and knew that to take Eeyou Istchee's future into their own hands the Cree needed to be directly involved in transportation on their territory.

Air Creebec's President Matthew Happyjack said that this idea of autonomy was born in 1975 with the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement.

"Crees were looking for different ideas on how to grow their money," he told *the Nation*. "Since the only way to access the communities at that time was by plane, they knew they needed to start an airline."

Getting the company off the ground did require some outside support, however. Securing a partnership with the Deluce family, which has since gone on to start Porter Airways, gave Air Creebec access to financial backing,



existing infrastructure and a wealth of aviation experience.

While things weren't always easy, starting out with the right partners and growing slowly but surely allowed the company to flourish over time – the key acquisition being the purchase of the Deluce family's share of the airline in 1987. Since then Air Creebec has been 100% Cree-owned with all-Cree representation on its board of directors.

"Of course there were growing pains," said Happyjack. "Getting to know the industry, expanding to Montreal, establishing ourselves with medical and mining companies. We stabilized the company eventually but it was really tough at first."

"Being able to choose the right partners and negotiate a transfer agreement where eventually the Crees would take control…I'm proud to say that Air Creebec has always had a Cree president and a Cree board of directors," added Pash. "We did have some outside representation on the BOD level at certain times, but the key leadership has always been Cree."

As Air Creebec continues to grow it must also adapt to new regulations and the ever-changing conditions of Canada's aviation and transportation industry. Most recently, the company was forced to adjust its flight schedule due to new restrictions on the number of hours pilots can fly in a single day.

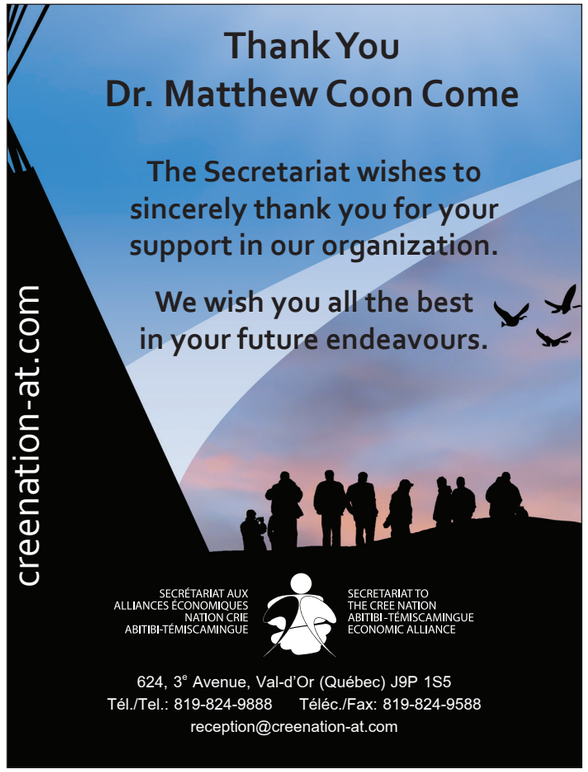
The weekend schedule remains unchanged and while there are now two flights from Montreal to Val-d'Or each weekday, some of the flights to the other Cree communities have had to be altered. (See the full schedule at aircreebec.ca)

"We're governed by the highest level of standards available to airlines in Canada," said Pash. "One of those things is the pilot duty/rest period. They're going to be limited on the number of hours they're allowed to fly during the day, limited even further than they were before. This means some of our flights will no longer be legal to do as we do them now. What we used to be able to do with one crew will now take two or three.

"It's normal for an airline to continuously adapt to market conditions as well as regulatory conditions," she added. "Our new schedule is an adaptation to the new regulatory conditions that are coming. We are phasing in new flights in anticipation of the new regulations that will be enforceable soon."

"Sometimes we make changes not because we want to, but because we're

Pash noted that the birth of Air Creebec came partly out of necessity and partly as a push for Cree independence. The trappers turned business operators, people like former Grand Chief and company president Billy Diamond, looked at their environment and knew that to take Eeyou Istchee's future into their own hands the Cree needed to be directly involved in transportation on their territory.


Thank You
Dr. Matthew Coon Come
The Secretariat wishes to sincerely thank you for your support in our organization.
We wish you all the best in your future endeavours.
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forced to," stressed Happyjack. "If we don't make these changes [Transport Canada] is going to take away our license."

Looking to the future, Happyjack and Pash believe that careful planning, innovation and a team approach are the key ingredients to growing the Air Creebec brand and improving the services it provides to Eeyou Istchee and beyond.

"We'll continue to make long-term partnerships with our major clients," said Happyjack. "We have safety objectives, operational objectives and financial objectives and that's the key thing – planning and executing our goals.

"The board really supports us, and our Cree shareholders are part of the company," he continued. "Plus, the employees are the key component of the company – they are the backbone."

"If you look at where we started, where we are today and where we're headed – no pun intended – the sky is the limit," laughed Pash. "Like Matthew [Coon Come] said, we are getting stronger through our partnerships, the Cree Health Board is a great example. We've been able to decrease the operational costs of the CHB while increasing our flight volume. And there are partnerships both inside and outside the Cree Nation that we can access."

Long term, the goal is to grow the company and achieve brand recognition, Pash emphasized.

"I want us to be well-known outside of Eeyou Istchee and the area we serve. I want people to know that Air Creebec is a solid airline that provides a safe and reliable service. I want to be right up there with the other 705 operators, like Air Canada and Air Transat, so that when people are flying in an area we serve we're one of the names that pops into their head.

"It's a fabulous company and there's so many potential opportunities. It's great working here," concluded Pash. "We've been having fun, hey Matthew?"

"I want us to be well known outside of Eeyou Istchee and the area we serve. I want people in Montreal and elsewhere to know that ***Air Creebec is a solid airline that provides a safe and reliable service"***

-Tanya Pash

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If you are a Cree beneficiary, the Cree Nation Government (CNG) can help you to fill out the record suspension application and if you qualify for financial assistance, the CNG may pay the costs associated with the application.

Need Help on How to Apply?

Contact your Local Community Reintegration Officer:

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Eastmain:	819-977-2400
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Whapmagoostui:	819-929-3796

If you have any additional questions or need more information, please contact the Correctional Services Regional Office in Val-d'Or at 819-874-2600 or by email at justice.valdor@cngov.ca

www.creejustice.ca

Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come: An Exceptional Leader!

We recognize the tremendous contribution of the Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees and Cree Nation Government in his defense of the Cree Nation right. Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come's exemplary leadership and formidable talent have led to the growth of Cree communities while respecting their values and fundamental rights. For this and for all of his work, the Grand Chief deserves our respect and admiration.

We have been fortunate to work with the Grand Chief for several years and we wish him the best of success in the pursuit of his career. Our firm will remain a partner of choice of the Grand Council of the Crees and Cree Nation Government.

Congratulations Grand Chief on your achievements and best of luck!

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Indigenous group erects tipi at Canada 150 celebrations, engages partygoers in dialogue

Photos by ***Chairs and Tables***

by Dan Isaac

IT'S NOT OUR PARTY

On the eve of the Canada 150 celebrations on Parliament Hill, a group calling themselves the Bawaating Water Protectors from Sault Ste. Marie were stopped by a wall of angry police officers while trying to set up a teepee on the edge of the celebration grounds. Initially, nine protestors were detained as a standoff ensued between police and the group well into the night.

"It was scary," said Jessica Bolduc, an Anishinaabe from Batchewana First Nation and the project coordinator of the 4Rs Youth Movement. "Our perspective was we needed to have a presence there that was grounded in the principles of ceremony, like non-violence. To be treated the way we were – it was like a clash of world views."

Through a process of negotiations with Ottawa Police and the RCMP, however, the confrontation was settled and the teepee was erected. Further negotiations with RCMP resulted in the teepee being moved to Parliament Hill right next to the Canada 150 main stage.

The Water Protectors were even able to light a sacred fire that they kept burning throughout the weekend. Other than the centennial flame, it was the first fire lit on Parliament Hill since a mysterious blaze destroyed the Centre Block in 1916.

For the group and its allies, the teepee and sacred fire was about reclaiming space for Indigenous people and engaging attendees on the other side of Canada's history.

"It's about reoccupying spaces where the land itself was stolen, and more than just symbolically asserting our rights," Bolduc told *the Nation*. "Reasserting Indigenous sovereignty and Indigenous law was a really hard thing for police and partygoers to get their heads around."

"The other part was to try to engage people in a dialogue around the half-truth that was going to be

CREE TRAPPERS' ASSOCIATION
"EST" 1978

On behalf of the Cree Trappers' Association and our members we truly appreciate your dedication to the Cree Nation and we acknowledge you for many years of service.

presented during the 150 celebrations," Bolduc added. "And the fact that it's a half-truth that makes invisible not only the history but the realities Indigenous people face today."

While the group succeeded in making its presence felt, the weather did not cooperate. Grey, overcast skies and rain presided over Canada 150, but at a certain point the soaked Water Protectors made light of their predicament.

"The weather was horrible but you have to laugh about it. Shoes became a no go," joked Bolduc. "It's funny how you create these connections. People who you didn't know going in become your close friends while you're fighting in the trenches."

But the wet conditions certainly hindered the engagement part of their strategy.

"The rain dampened everyone's spirits and made it harder for the people there celebrating to connect with our message," she said. "People said, we should be ashamed of what we were doing. As if wanting a better life for people is something to be ashamed of. It was putting a mirror to the reality we're in. I want better for Canada, but I don't think Canada wants better for Canada."

However, the group received sizeable support both online and in person. The initial video of the confrontation with police posted by Candace Day Neveau received nearly 20,000 views on Facebook; people from across the world showed support via social media; donations came pouring in for the group while they were camped out on Parliament Hill; and there were plenty of positive and respectful engagements between the group and those who were there to party.

"As isolating as it felt to be on Parliament Hill – almost like us versus them – we were actually hundreds

"People said, '**we should be ashamed** of what we were doing.' As if wanting a better life for people is something to be ashamed of."

- Jessica Bolduc

Taapwaauchaayimiisu
Believe In Yourself

OUR PROGRAM

Taapwaauyimiisu (Believe in youself) program is a resource available for the schools in the three Cree communities, where the pilot project is currently being launched . We offer support to the students' ages 12 to 17 years old who, for various reasons, are temporarily suspended from 3 to 5 days from school.

The expression ***"Believe in yourself"*** is dear to our program as we want to send a strong message of empowerment and self-worth to our youth.

OUR SERVICE SITES

Taapwaauchaayimiisu program in Mistissini has officially moved in their new service site at the Family Resource Centre (Old Youth Centre). Thank you, Cree Nation of Mistissini, for your collaboration in providing space for our youth.

We would also like to thank everyone that attended our open houses in Waskaganish and Chisasibi.

Should you require more information, please contact the coordinator.

Tel: ***(819) 527-0407***
E-mail: ***Byourself@cngov.ca***

Alternative Suspension YMCA
Department of Justice and Correctional Services, CNG
Cree School Board

of thousands strong," said Bolduc. "It showed me that social media can be transformative when used properly."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau even showed up for a surprise visit. Unfortunately, Bolduc just missed him. "It was great that Trudeau and his wife came down to the teepee but on the other side of it, was there a real intention to have an actual dialogue?" Bolduc asked. "But maybe he was doing the tradish-nish thing of dropping by unannounced to have a cup of tea. I also know the people who were there held him accountable."

For Bolduc, the weekend was tinted in inspiration. "As I was sitting in the teepee with all the youth from different nations holding council, it felt like we were going way back. Like, back to the future," Bolduc said with a laugh. "It was beautiful to sit in that circle and listen to the youth speak. They felt so passionate about what we were doing that they were ready to sacrifice their lives as they knew them."

But as the Water Protectors were tidying up to leave, the very culture gap they were attempting to close became apparent. "There was such a contrast between how we treated our area and how everyone celebrating treated the grounds," said Bolduc. "The Hill was disgusting, and so was Ottawa. People were just throwing garbage everywhere. We have some work to do."

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As Grand Chief,
Dr. Coon Come
was dedicated to making
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promise of leadership. And,
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worked on the difficult details
to develop the
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Network vision. Most of all,
he provided much needed support to help
face down skeptics.

As Grand Chief, he inspired ECN to advance its capability to reach all Cree homes with the same high quality service that it currently provides for Health and Education.

ECN will always be grateful to him for being there

Casey Bosum makes his debut at
national arm wrestling meet

ARMPOWER

By Dan Coyle | Photos provided by John Bosum

Casey Bosum continued to make his climb up the competitive arm wrestling ranks earlier in July, when he made his debut at the 2017 Canadian National Armwrestling Championships, held in Halifax over the Canada Day weekend.

Affectionately called "The Beast" by his teachers and fellow students at Beurling Academy in Montreal, where he will enter Secondary IV in September, young Casey now has four years of competitive arm wrestling under his belt.

Now 14 years old, Casey made his competitive debut at age 10 with an impressive third-place finish in the youth category at the prestigious Mike Gould Classic, and placed sixth at the 2016 Quebec provincial championships, where he battled competitors ranging in age from 12 to 14.

Casey faced the stiffest competition of his young arm wrestling career at this year's Canadian Nationals, battling the country's best arm wrestlers under the age of 18 in the 75+kilogram category.

While Casey fell short of a title against much older and more physically mature competitors, finishing in seventh place in both the left-handed and right-handed events, the experience will play a key role in his development as an arm wrestler.

Chris Gobby, a Montreal-based arm wrestler who trained extensively with Casey ahead of his recent trip to Halifax, agrees.

And Gobby ought to know. The 13-year arm wrestling veteran counts two Canadian national championship titles among his 150 career victories, along with a bronze medal victory at the Professional Armwrestling Conference world championships in 2006.

"Casey's natural progression has been strong and consistent as he's aged," said Gobby in an interview with *the Nation*.

"His greatest strength is his table technique and mechanics, while his greatest weakness remains his structural muscular strength."

While he openly discusses the areas of the game that Casey needs to work on, Gobby remains highly optimistic that time, maturity and a continued commitment to training will

enable Casey to easily overcome those youthful issues.

In addition, the former Canadian champion believes the youngster from Oujé-Bougoumou has the necessary mental discipline to excel in the highly competitive arm-wrestling arena.

"Mental focus is a big part of competition in my sport," explains Gobby. "This is where Casey excels way past his age bracket. His mind and aggression, his assertiveness, is well honed. For what reason, I'm not sure. It could be innate. His father doesn't possess it."

That is particularly high praise considering that Casey's father, John Bosum, has established a successful track record of his own in competitive arm wrestling.

Like his son Casey, John was attracted to arm wrestling at a very young age. But it wasn't until he was in his mid-20s that he began competing in major tournaments, claiming second place in his debut at the Quebec provincial championships, and also taking home second-place honours at the 2009 Mike Gould Classic.

Since that event, John has been squarely focused on being a dad, instilling values in his son like the importance of an education, and the personal value gained from training for events like the Canadian National Armwrestling Championships.

"We had eight months to prepare for Halifax, and we trained our asses off," said the elder Bosum with a hearty laugh. "And a big thank you to Chris Gobby for helping Casey prepare."

Part of that training involved having Casey compete in the gym against fellow arm wrestlers up to four years older than him.

"Those 17- and 18-year-olds were pretty strong, but they didn't realize Casey is only 14, and were very surprised at his power and competitiveness."

I will stick to the same training methods for now. But most importantly, I need to learn how to lose before I can become a national champion. My opponent is not the guy across the table from me, ***my opponent is myself***

- Casey Bosum

While John is incredibly passionate about his son's education and physical development, he had some training of his own to do, preparing to make his first arm-wrestling tournament appearance since 2009 at this year's Canadian Nationals.

The eight-year layoff seemed to have little effect on the gentle giant, who took home the bronze while competing in the 110+kilogram Men's Masters class.

While John had little to say about his own achievements in Halifax, he was eager to heap praise on community and family members, whose sponsorship made their road trip to Halifax possible.

"A big thank you to the OJ band for their major sponsorship, and also special thanks to Stella Diamond, Casey's aunt, who helped us by going around Waskaganish with a sponsorship sheet and raised well over $500. We couldn't have done it without them."

With the Canadian Nationals behind him and no arm-wrestling tournaments scheduled in the immediate future, it remains unclear what comes next for Casey, who is focused on training and spending time with family before returning to school in September.

"I will stick to the same training methods for now," said the youngster. "But most importantly, I need to learn how to lose before I can become a national champion. My opponent is not the guy across the table from me, my opponent is myself, and my first victory comes from applying what I have learned from my training."

Casey's comments echo those of Gobby, when asked what advice the former champion would offer to an aspiring young arm wrestler.

"Embrace and prepare for the fact you have hard losses coming," said Gobby. "Fall in love with the essence and community of arm wrestling, and you will embark on a great and fruitful journey."

Alternative Suspension

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Réseau de communications EEYOU Communications Network

EXCHANGE

ECN TELLS CRTC: HIGH-SPEED INTERNET AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE

ECN proposed that the CRTC set up Internet subsidies for residents of northern communities so that they could have affordable and reliable service. ECN was supported in its presentation by the Cree Nation Government.

These are the highlights:

Universal Internet Service

An Internet subsidy insures that consumers receive the services they require and that high costs will not isolate remote areas. Consumers in rural areas should have the same right to use all basic services at the same price as those who live in Canada's major cities.

Honesty in Advertising

Services that are advertised must be delivered the same way they are promoted. We do not buy a litre of milk because only some of the containers are full. We expect every litre to measure one litre. Deceptive telecom advertising such as "up to" speeds should be prohibited. Quality of service is as important as availability of service.

Deliver High-Quality Service

Unreliability and limited capability of the Internet are no longer acceptable. It's time for change. ECN is determined to meet that challenge and deliver quality beyond what is expected.

L to R: (Front) Hyman Glustein, Alfred Loon, Dr. Ted Moses, Bella Moses Petawabano, François Turgeon; (Rear) Cedric Melançon, Louis Lavergne

Ted Moses: "We are asking for a level playing field so that people in our communities can do the best they can without obstacles and without hindrance. We all need the same services and we all need to be treated fairly."

Make Real Internet an Affordable Reality

Subsidies are necessary to ensure that services in outlying areas are affordable. If services are not affordable, they are not accessible.

ECN has now proposed $55 for a 50/50 Meg service speed with a 60 GB cap. Phone companies provide DSL at about 1/20th of that speed for about $10 more. Cellulars provide about 1/5th of the speed for about 1½ times the price with caps around 5 GB.

In addition, ECN proposed that its customers are subsidized so that Eeyou Istchee residents pay the same rates at major cities.

ECN EXCHANGE will be back in the Nation next month. Email questions to: exchange@eeyou.ca

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The art of **celebration**

by Sonny Orr

Rez Notes

The young boy aims for the sitting goose on the pond, a loner, we called it. Using a .410 shotgun, he squeezed off a single shot, killing the goose. We all smile and cheer silently, as other geese are showing up over the treetops and heading for our blind. Later that evening, the goose is completely cleaned. The neck to the head is sewn up with intricate beadwork and people are happily getting ready to celebrate a young man's first goose. On other occasions, the first kill of any species is recognized and acknowledged in respect for both the animal and hunter. Sharing this kill is an honour and a good excuse to feast.

One of my favourite celebrations is the birthday. That is, until the children and grandchildren outnumber the number of months and weeks in a year and attending everyone's party becomes a full-time job. Having too much fun does have its downside when it comes to birthdays, so I propose that there be one day a year set aside for everyone to celebrate their birthday. To make it even better, have it in August, which doesn't seem to have any official holiday. The International Birthday would top the commercial charts everywhere in the world for gift sales simply because everyone has a birthday, duh!

But why do we have to celebrate just about everything? We could have another day and call it International Life Day where just the act of getting up and carrying yourself around to do your everyday things like cooking a homemade meal and posting it or changing the diaper for the first time. How about going binge shopping at a distant mall during another sales event? Just to say you survived those kinds of life things, the little drips in your bucket list.

Everyone who has a 9-to-5 job could observe this day. Coffee would be the National Drink and peak performance working on the job contests could be held. The entire world would be all hyped up. It's like the run of the bulls – dangerous but you do it anyways.

Life does have its memorable moments that actually were fun but are only realized decades later, like the first time tobacco hit your lungs. I remember my first time, it was a giant cigar that my buddy stole from his dad and we were out back lighting it up. Buddy goes into convulsions and we cough our guts out, swearing never to ever smoke again. Nothing to party about on a national scale but perhaps we could call it First Mishap Day, the morning set aside in respect for those who didn't make it and the rest of the day for the lucky survivors. It could be really cool if death-defying acts were thrown in for good measure and secretly call it National Adrenaline Day.

People tend to complain a lot, if you haven't noticed. We could make this a sombre three-day event, where everyone could complain, rant and rave, and speak their mind on just about everything. This would be the most expensive time to buy insurance so everyone who might have an accident that day would be out of luck as most insurance brokers would be on holiday, knowing that the rates were too high and if a sale was actually made, they made money anyways. This could be held in April, right after April Fool's Day, because, who wants to ruin summer with negativity?

Yep, the holidays could be adjusted. Now how about adding some holinights?

Under the Northern Sky

The ride home

by Xavier Kataquapit

I rode back from a great meal at the old Pierini homestead cottage on my motorcycle the other night. I was hoping to beat the rain on my way back to Kirkland Lake. It wasn't a long ride but the sun had gone down and heavy clouds hung overhead with light drizzle here and there. As I drove, the rain began to pelt then turned into stinging droplets that bounced off my leather jacket and jeans. I put down my visor, slowed down and took it easy.

In the blue twilight, the forest around me became a dark silhouette of familiar pointed pine trees. I could feel the rain slowly soaking through some of my clothing. The air was chilled but I was warm and dry under my layers. I breathed in the fresh scent of the rain, the pine forest and the damp muskeg around me. The hum of a 1978 Honda Goldwing rumbled underneath me and I kept an eye out for traffic, animals, obstacles on the road and the slick wet pavement. I couldn't help but be reminded of a time not so long ago back in my community of Attawapiskat.

Every summer during the long hot days of July, my parents, Susan and Marius, would often take us out onto James Bay for a day trip or for a long weekend to Akamiski Island or Twin Island a bit north of the mouth of the Attawapiskat River. Those were great trips as they offered us children a chance to break away from the community and spend time with each other on the land without any distractions or the dysfunction of town living. Life was simple out there on the land. We all pitched in to make a fire. Someone would boil water for a large pot of strong tea. Mom would prepare a goose and make bannock. Dad tended to the camp repairing items we needed to survive, maintaining the outboard motor or building shelters.

Once we had settled down and some work was done we all ended up around the campfire with nothing to do but enjoy each other's company. Mom and dad would tell us stories of the land and the people, our relatives and our ancestors who inhabited this area for generations.

When it was time to bed down, it was easy to fall into sleep with the crackling of the burning logs, the lapping of the ocean water on the pebble shore and the wind in the trees to send us peacefully into the dream world. It was so comfortable to be in the wilderness surrounded by my family and parents out here on the island shore away from all the complexities of a modern life back in the community.

When we finally packed up to leave, we were always disappointed to be heading back into town. Even though we were returning to friends and family there was something unsettling about having to head back to a life of so many rules, boundaries and demands.

More often than not, dad would plan our return home for the latest high tide of the day, which usually meant we would be riding our 22-foot freighter canoe in the dark. Keeping track of tides is an important skill in the north and one has to know what the water level is at all times because if you arrive at the wrong moment, you either damage your canoe or motor and you might get stranded for hours somewhere on the bay or the river before you could complete your journey.

I can still hear dad hollering over the roar of his 30-horsepower Yamaha outboard motor, letting us know we were almost at the river. He would skilfully head south along the coast, being fully aware of where the mouth of the river was before turning west. Many times it would rain on those cool late summer evenings and we would shelter ourselves under blue-coloured plastic tarps as we made our way home.

The scent of the pine, the damp muskeg, the rain and the oily exhaust of the motor make up the same ingredients I identified with on my bike ride. The hum of the motor and the darkness of the landscape all around me took me back. The cold, the wet, the wind in my face and the smells all send me back to those trips on the land.

As I guided the Goldwing through the rain on the dark highway I could almost sense that if I glanced into my rear view mirror I would see my dad at the back of the canoe keeping us safe and moving forward at the controls. It occurred to me with a deep feeling of contentment that no matter where I go these days, my parents are never far from my mind.

It occurred to me with a deep feeling of contentment that no matter where I go these days, **my parents are never far from my mind.**

Hydro-Québec would like to take this opportunity to join the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee to honor Grand Chief Dr. Matthew Coon Come and his extraordinary contribution to the development and economic progress of Eeyou Istchee.

We would also like to thank him for his commitment and achievements in bringing about a new relationship between the Cree Nation Government and Hydro-Québec since the beginning of the 21st century. His vision and significant contribution to the Niskamoon Corporation allowed Hydro-Québec and the Crees to get to know each other better, which was fundamental in the establishment of a fruitful relationship based on mutual respect and partnership.

We wish Dr. Coon Come a wonderful, fulfilling retirement in the company of his loved ones.

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